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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2016
TAGS: [ECON](#) [EWWT](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: IRAN APPROACHES ENVIRONMENTAL ARM OF GREEK
SHIPPING INDUSTRY REGARDING ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPING
'IRANMEPA.'

Classified By: Ambassador Charles Ries for reasons 1.4 (B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: During a meeting on other issues, the Director General of the Hellenic Marine Environmental Protection Association (HELMEPA), Dimitris Mitsatsos, asked econoff about the potential USG foreign policy implications of helping the Iranian Shipping Industry to establish its own Marine Environmental Protection Association (MEPA). Mitsatsos said he was approached by an un-named Iranian official while at a meeting in Hong Kong earlier in March of this year.

HELMEPA Background

¶2. (C) HELMEPA exists primarily as a public relations organization for Greek shipowners. Its aim is to counter widespread Greek social animosity towards organizations that are often perceived to be profiting at the expense of Greek society. Through its annual seafarer education programs, as well as outreach to school age children, HELMEPA engages in just enough environmental work to maintain its legitimate status as an NGO. (Website: www.helmeпа.gr)

The Iran Question

¶3. (C) HELMEPA is influential as a result of its status as an overall advisor within the global shipping industry to establish independent country specific MEPA programs around the world. Examples of their influence can be seen in Australia (AUSMEPA), Cyprus (CYMEPA) and Turkey (TURMEPA) among others. Efforts are underway to form MEPAs in China and Hong Kong as well as other parts of the world, thus the proposed IRANMEPA would not be without precedence. The approach of the Director General from an un-named representative of INLA, (Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines) at a recent meeting in Hong Kong was characterized by Mitsatsos as purely "exploratory." When presented with USG concerns over WMD proliferation and terrorist assistance, Mitsatsos maintained that although shipowners shared these concerns, neither HELMEPA nor its global MEPA partners maintain any control over the specific actions of its membership.

¶5. (C) Comment: Greece casts a very large shadow in the world of global shipping, as Greek owned or controlled vessels account for almost 14% of the world's total dead weight tonnage. While the actual intentions of Iran remain unclear regarding the possible establishment of an IRANMEPA, informal recognition by a leading Greek Shipping organization would provide greater visibility and legitimacy to their maritime interests in the global marketplace. End Comment.

